



1939, 9th MAIN, 27th CROSS, BANASHANKARI 2nd
Stage, BENGALURU - 560070
Phone: 6364928222
E-Mail : ccsbng@gmail.com
Website: ccsbng.org

18th January 2023

To,

Shri Tejpal Singh,
Advisor (QoS-I),
TRAI, New Delhi

Sir,

Subject:- Consultation Paper on Regulation on Rating Framework for Digital Connectivity in Buildings or Areas

We are a registered CAG of TRAI.

We are pleased to forward our **counter comments** on some of the issues mentioned in the above consultation paper.

Thanking you,
Yours Sincerely

GOPAL RATNAM V
Secretary
Consumer Care Society
M:8618226492

Counter Comments
on
Consultation Paper on Regulation on Rating Framework for Digital Connectivity in Buildings or Areas

TRAI has been enjoined under the TRAI Act, 1997, among other objectives, to Protect the Interests of Consumers of the Telecom Sector and also Promote and Ensure the Orderly growth of the Telecom Sector. With the skewed nature of the telecom market with a few service providers (almost a duopoly in most areas) and with the past experience of consumers with the service providers, it imperative of the part of TRAI to formulate and implement regulations that ensure that the interest of the consumers are protected. Further, the growth of any industry in technology and innovation will only happen with a nudge from the regulator or government, especially in an oligopoly or duopoly.

However, the Consultation Paper is unfortunately quite inadequate in this regard and almost all the comments offered, especially by the TSPs and ISPs, have been quite partisan and prejudicial to the interests of the consumers. The approach adopted by the Consultation Paper and the Comments is modest and reactive, hence unlikely to serve the interest of consumers or ensure that the infrastructure is world class, so that businesses in India can compete on the global level.

We provide our counter comments on some of these issues/points.

Q.1- Do you agree with the broad classification of Buildings or Areas (also referred as Buildings) from Digital Connectivity perspectives provided in Section-3 of this chapter? If not, what could be other yardsticks to classify Buildings for provisions of near uniform Digital Connectivity Infrastructures in similar types of Buildings. Please justify your answer with suitable examples.

No. Most of the comments/responses are in agreement with the broad classification of Buildings or Areas as mentioned in the consultation paper. Kindly refer to the responses of Broadband India Forum and AIRTEL among others.

We suggest that the buildings and areas be classified on the quality of connectivity available at these locations instead of the nature of civil structures or their labels like homes and offices. As mentioned in the consultation paper, a home can be used as an office (work from home) or building as work from anywhere. A consumer (resident or buyer or renter) would be interested to know the quality of digital connectivity in any or a particular location and whether that meets his requirements, irrespective of the type or name of the civil structure.

In our counter comments to Q4, we elaborate on this.

Q.2- How the Infrastructure Providers (IPs) and Digital Communication Infrastructure Providers (DCIPs) can play an instrumental role in the effective development and deployment of DCI in Buildings or Area? Please provide your answers supporting the best practices followed internationally or national level in this regard.

Most of comments concur with the CP approach to include IPs and DCIPs under this regulation. We believe this would not provide consumers with choice at the field level and club 2 different

types of competencies and scope into one. The DCIPs should be more local to be able to handle even the rating for a single house if the property owner is interested. Further with a national approach and concomitant specifications of network as suggested by a few responses would limit competition and reduce consumer choice.

We suggest a graded approach. Bigger and National IPs will handle bigger projects in terms of project value. This would be similar to the situations in certain utilities like electricity and construction. DCIPs should be classified as Class I, Class II, ... etc with the smaller DCIPs handling the small consumer in a remote location. DCIPs at the highest class should be permitted to handle larger projects.

The technical capabilities can be established for the different classes of DCIPs.

Q.3-What should be the key eligibility conditions including experience requirements for the Digital Connectivity Rating Agency (DCRA) proposed under the rating framework? Should there be any performance security for an agency to be DCRA and what should be criteria to evaluate their performances? Please also indicate broad scope of work covering additional aspects of Rating of Buildings for Digital Connectivity, if any, including area of operations [Nation-wide, State(s)/Union Territories(UTs) or Combination of States/UTs] of a DCRA.

No response.

Q.4-With reference to the rating criteria proposed in table at Section 6.2, kindly provide list of possible sub-criteria and corresponding sub-weightage against each criterion with justification? Please also indicate any other aspect which need to be included or modified in the proposed weightage criteria. Please provide your answer with suitable justifications.

Most of the comments submitted agree with the rating criteria suggested with modifications and additions. Kindly refer to the responses of AIRTEL, BSNL and Tata Teleservices.

TRAI in the consultation paper has focused on the QoS and QoE as important end goals to be achieved. However, for obtaining the Rating, many measures that focus on the infrastructure and just one measure of User Experience with a weightage of 10 %, is included. Such a Rating will obfuscate the various dimensions of digital connectivity and will mislead consumers. For while five stars is better than four stars, it does not inform the customer of the quality of digital connectivity and performance on the various criteria.

We suggest that there be 2 Ratings that be provided for the Buildings. One is for the Infrastructure that is being rated, based on the purpose for which it is being constructed. That is the peak requirement for a period of time, 5 years. After this, the Rating of the Building should be done for the next period of 5 years. This rating is necessary for the building to be provisioned for telecom services. This rating can be technical and is meant for the Property Manager, Rating Agencies and TSPs/ISPs. Most of the criteria mentioned in the Consultation Paper can be used for this Rating.

The second Rating is for consumers. The criteria in the second ratings are based on factors that are of relevance to the consumers of the telecom services. It would be easy to understand and use. A partial set of criteria for this second rating is provided in our comments for Q5.

We firmly believe this dual ratings will be consumer oriented and enable consumers to have considered choice, eliminate mis-selling and reduce consumer grievances.

Q.5- What should be the template and minimum score for award of ratings i.e., star-based ratings or any other template like Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze? Please justify your suggestions.

Again, most of the comments concur with the above suggestions.

Our view is that these ratings have deficiencies that need to be removed for the ratings to serve as an easy, clearer and objective standard for the consumer to base their decisions. Our suggestion is similar to that is available for the bonds. Ratings are given A,B,C,D etc and within this broad class finer sub-divisions of single +, Double ++, are provided. The alphabet would indicate the quality of digital connectivity that is available in a building or across an area. This is elaborated in the table below. The pluses indicate the number of ISPs and TSPs, whether Fixed line or Wireless, that are able to meet the quality standards of connectivity.

Sl. No	Rating	Coverage	Reliability	Speed and any other factors
1	A	100	100	Higher than B
2	B	100	100	The current standards that would be Industry norms determined for using 5G for 100 % of the users in a building, facility or an area
3	C	100	99	The current standards that would be Industry norm determined for using 5G for 100 % of the users in an building, facility or an area
4	D	100	99	Below than C
5				

We have listed 2 factors that are of importance to Consumers.

Coverage : Service of Specified standards at all points in the property/area.

Reliability: Availability of Service of Specified standards throughout the day.

This is just a partial list to show how the Rating can be constructed. The Industry Norms should be clearly specified and publicised. The Industry Norms could change over a period of time, and hence the Rating would automatically change if no improvements are done. Meaning, if a new higher norm is specified than all buildings with ratings B and C would have to automatically without any time delay be de-rated to D.

Also, with a rating higher than the specified norm, there is an incentive for any Property Manager/Service Provider to improve their infrastructure and services beyond the current industry norm that is specified.

Q.6- The proposed workflow and process of Rating of Buildings for digital connectivity is given in Section-8 of this Chapter. Kindly provide your comments or suggestion for improvement of the proposed workflow and process of rating with justification, if any.

Q.7. Do you agree with the eligibility conditions for registration of DCRA, proposed in regulation 4? If no, what additional eligibility conditions for registration of DCRA may be incorporated, considering the present rating ecosystem in other domains in the country, with suitable justifications?

Q.8- Do you agree with the process of registrations of DCRA proposed under regulation 7? If not, kindly suggest proposed changes with justifications.

Q.9- Please suggest code of conduct for DCRA's proposed to be included under regulation 8 including the criteria for fees to be charged by DCRA's from Property Managers for different types of Buildings.

Q.10- Do you agree with the general obligations of DCRA provided in Section III of the draft regulations? If not, please provide suggested changes with justifications.

Q.11- What should be the terms & conditions for the Property Managers to ensure use of ratings awarded to their buildings, in legalised manner?

Q.12- Please suggest changes, if any, in the general obligations of Property Managers, provided under Section IV of draft regulations, with justifications.

GOPAL RATNAM V
Secretary
Consumer Care Society
M:8618226492